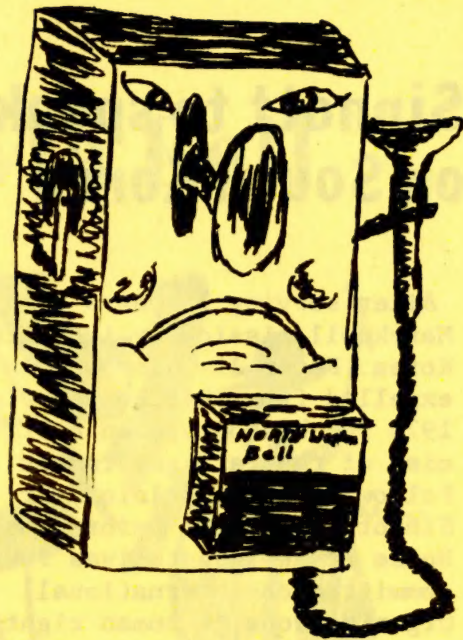


Jousting with Ma Bell



Prison- Slavery

VIA PACIS
(the way of peace)

DES MOINES
CATHOLIC WORKER HOUSE

VOLUME 1, NO. 4
FEBRUARY, 1977

Sinnott to speak on South Korea

After serving 15 years as a Maryknoll missionary in South Korea, Father Jim Sinnott was expelled from that country in 1975 for his outspoken criticism of the Park government. Following his expulsion, Fr. Sinnott testified before the House of Representatives Subcommittee on International Organizations in human rights violations in South Korea. He is a well known speaker, and appears in the BBC documentary Anno Domini which portrays the churches' involvement in human rights--specifically the executions of eight Koreans in 1975.

On his ongoing concern for human rights Fr. Sinnott says "I'm giving you one more piece in a puzzle.. it's our foreign policy, yours and mine. Your tax dollar is supporting the torturers, the murderers in South Korea."

Fr. Sinnott will be visiting the house February 20 at 8 p.m. for a discussion of human rights in South Korea. He is also making several appearances in the Des Moines area at other times on February 20 and 22. For more information, contact Joe at the house.

Winter Discussions

Part of the Catholic Worker tradition is the "round table discussion" where people join together to verbalize and clarify thoughts. Mass is celebrated every Friday at the house (713 Indiana, One block north of University between 7th and 8th) at 8 p.m. followed by a discussion.

Feb 11: Hospitality and the Catholic Worker: Frank, Ed and Joe will lead the discussion.

Feb 18: the BBC documentary Anno Domini, about the violations of human rights in South Korea will be shown.

Feb 20 (Sunday) 8 p.m. Fr. Jim Sinnott, a Maryknoll missionary expelled from South Korea will speak from his experience.

Feb 25: Northern Ireland: Margaret Quigley speaks of her experience in a recent visit.

Mar 4: A History of Non-violent action: Steve Marsden will present a slide show and commentary.

Mar 11: Igal Roodenko: the anti-war activist will speak and answer questions.

Mar 18: The Berrigans and the Catholic Church in the USA: with Fr. Jack Smith.

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via pacis

Jousting with Ma Bell

Dear Friends,

It has been close to six months of constant jousts with our formidable windmill, yet we have discovered that the spirit of Don Quixote still lives. It is worth the effort to resist, even Ma Bell, when personalism wins.

In August of last year, we requested that the telephone for our new house be listed as "Catholic Worker House." After a series of "I'll let you talk to my supervisor" by Northwestern Bell employees, we were informed that any listing other than a personal name is considered a business and will be charged a business rate--\$22 a month. Of course, we could not pay the extra charge for a business listing (\$14 per month) and we resented Ma Bell's defining our efforts as a business.

We saddled our burrow and steed, and equipped with lance, contested Bell's arbitrary definition of who we are and what we are about. Our request for a hearing by the Iowa State Commerce Commission was denied, and the commission ruled in favor of Bell. The company's reply to our written complaint contended the "feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and giving shelter to the homeless" was the same function performed by other public or private agencies. Therefore, since other agencies are rated



as businesses, our "agency" warranted a business rating.

In hopes of finding someone to represent our misunderstood position, we were fortunate to solicit the services of Roger Forman, a legal aid attorney. Roger is a native of New York City and familiar with the Catholic Worker, its history and philosophy. He joined our quixotic crusade and we were again petitioning the Commerce Commission for a hearing on the matter. continued on p 7

February, 1977

Prison — Slavery

Prison is an extension of society, also, however society, it must be seen, is likewise an extension of prison. For the same techniques, goals and subterfuges found in the institution of slavery we know as prison are also found to greater and lesser degrees in the general condition of humanity.

Nor has civilization yet outgrown its need and dependence on the techniques of violence and coercion, the goals of materialistic accommodation and adaptation and the subterfuges of bureaucratic unresponsiveness (buck-passing) and avoidance of people as people and not merely as cogs or abstractions. All these we find "in extremis" in prison, but we also find them in abundance everywhere else within the societal structure.

The mere fact the society--us--we--permit slavery in our midst in such overt fashion demonstrates how little we hold sacrosanct God's gift to man--free will.

If one is in prison--all are imprisoned. As long as one is a slave, none are free. Do we pity the poor and the scapegoated who have been so misfortunated as to be cast in the ultimate shackles of cages and bars? Or are we not yet aware of the penultimate bonds that grip us--the soul chains of ignorance and avarice that permit such institutions to exist.



Robert McGovern

And the institutions of coercion and free will usurpation are all around us in prisons, military, asylums, schools church creeds and restrictive beliefs, dogmas, work regimentation and bossism, etc. No one is free--we are all imprisoned in the shackles of our own making. And all these are mere symbols of our deep dark soul ignorance and bondage to Mammon--material illusion that is in contradiction to God--realization and self-awareness--spirit efflorescence that we are and must become.

Jesus died on a cross--as did other so called "criminals" of his day. John the Baptist spent a year and a half in prison before he was beheaded. Socrates drank the hemlock while confined. And Gandhi and King each spent considerable periods in prison doing penance for the entire society. If one is criminal we all are criminals. If God in Man is shackled in chains, so are we all, for the divinity in the one cannot be forgotten in the other: "Except ye do this unto the least of these, my brethren, ye do it unto me."

Love in the formal institutionalized prison is denied. As is there a negation of love everywhere. Love knows sharing and giving. Giving without even a thought of receiving. This is love, divine love--love from the spirit. And such love binds us to the fate of the downtrodden and poor everywhere. It binds us to the suffering (soul suffering, in spiritual darkness), yea, even the sick and greedy warlords and munitions makers, oil barons and bank presidents (who is more dangerous to the society, the one who sits on the hoard of money--the bank president--or the one who would distribute it a little--the bank robber?) who have determined it is their prerogative to keep the humanity down and in misery to further their own selfish

gains and idiocy. But lest we leave ourselves out of this reckoning--let us know and remember that who so ever utilizes more of the earth's natural resources than is his/her just due and need is in the process of exploiting and persecuting the rest of the communion of life--human and other that shares this planet with us.

The whole world may be fooled, but the self within is not. We may be respected by the world's eyes but not in the truth of truths, which is God.

Hypocrisy is everywhere--within and without. Jesus saved the strongest words of condemnation for such as us: "Vipers and sons of vipers." We must reform society--yes--but we must resurrect our own Christ-self first--or simultaneously: what is wanted is reformers, not of others, but of self.

Gaining the Divine perspective--which is our natural birthright and heritage--we shall then come to see the nature of ignorance and the possibilities of removal of same. Moment by moment as we live our life attuned to spirit, may we help one another to remove the fetters and blinders of spirit that have cast us all down into this pit of tenors known as earth plane living. And then shall the prison house of the world--continued on p 6

Let God flow

continued from p 5
the cave of darkness, as in Plato's allegory of cave-- be illumined by the light, life and love of Divine mercy and overarching joy. And no more shall these gross injustices and slave conditions



exist. The entire world is undergoing a crucifixion now--the cross of materialism binds tightly--but when the spirit is finally released, we shall have a resurrection and dawn such as can never be imagined, at least not at present, with the prevailing conditions/limitations of the "World Idea."

And then shall the Angels rejoice. And then shall God make manifest unto man his plan And then shall the Son of Man come to reclaim His own and together work out the redemption of all.

Now is the time. God plays through us--manifests and flows-- Son of Man--Christ-self--is within. Whosoever would be a helper in the kingdom of God must be about the Father's business. From moment to moment we are demonstrating and judging ourselves--are we fit? Then must we become more so. Letting go, we let God. Letting God, we let God flow. Peace.

--Elysian Dawn, fellow pioneer of the Eternal and Child of God, former inmate of institutionalized prisons, present inmate of the world.

Letter from a friend

Villa Stillman
Largo L. Guanella, 3
00165 Rome, Italy
January 22, 1977

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you for your letter and printed material. Am glad to see a Catholic Worker House in Des Moines. I pray for your work and I'll be happy to hear of your prayers

May the Lord bless you
Yours in Christ
L.G. Ligutti

Msgr. Ligutti is from the Des Moines Diocese and helped to form the Catholic Rural Life Conference

via pacis

It is good to win!

continued from p 3

Under the threat of taking the matter to a grand jury, a hearing was held December 16, 1976. The hearing by the three member Governor-appointed Commerce Commission brought the two of us together with Bell's lawyer, a representative from the commission staff, our lawyer, the press and other spectators. After listening to both sides and asking questions on the matter, there was an opportunity for final statements. Frank closed our statement by declaring "I am personally grossed out at Ma Bell's equating feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and giving shelter to the homeless as a business. Therein lies the difference between that man (the Bell representative) and us at this table."

The decision by the commission was made public February 1, 1977, in favor of the Catholic Worker House. The commission listed six criteria why we were granted the decision: 1. The requested listing as Catholic Worker House was in lieu of a personal listing or listing in the white pages of the directory. No bold face or yellow pages listing was requested or even desired. 2. the address of the house is that of a residential building in a residential neighborhood, occupied (at the time) by two residents. 3. Catholic Worker House is not organized or registered as a corporation, partnership or business associa-

tion; 4. no salaried social service personnel live or conduct activities at the address involved; 5. no money making endeavors are contemplated to take place at the residential location; and 6. the equipment involved is single line, as opposed to multi-line telephone equipment.

Although the decision is valid only in the state of Iowa, it is our hope that other houses can use our precedent in their battles with Ma Bell. We'll send copies of the decision to all who are interested.

At the beginning of our crusade, we had our doubts of how successful Don Quixote and Sancho could be against a powerful, multi-national corporation. Even though the booty may have seemed small, it is a victory for personalism in the day of computerized mass production. It is good to win!

In Christ's peace,
Frank Cordaro
Joe Da Via

Again we see the need for additional space for offering more hospitality. The remaining debt on our house is now down to \$1600. With some help, we can finish payments by April and spend the warm weather rehabilitating another adjoining property. At present we are still in need of carpenters and plumbers, people who will wash laundry on a weekly basis and any others with time to offer.

Catholic Worker House
713 Indiana
P.O. Box 4551
Des Moines, Iowa 50306
(515) 243-0765

A MOVEMENT

People come to join us in "our wonderful work " It all sounds very wonderful, but life itself is a haphazard untidy, messy affair Unless we can live simply unquestioningly, and solitary one might say, in the midst of a mob, then we cease to be a personalist The more we live with people in a community, the more we must look to ourselves and regard the beam in our own eyes The more we live with a babbling crowd, the more we must practice silence "For every idle word we speak we will be judged "

--Dorothy Day

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